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ABSTRACT

Content analysis of job descriptions written for principals in 68 of New Mexico's 88 school districts led to identification of 1,650 specific duties. Of these, 1,416 dealt with administrative or managerial functions while only 234 defined educational leadership responsibilities. Such an analysis is limited in that it identifies formally stated functions without clarifying their relative importance, and says nothing about the actual behavior of the principals whose duties are described. Still, the findings reflect a century-old tendency, explored in a brief historical review, to emphasize the principal's managerial functions at the expense of educational leadership. (Author/EGD)

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THE NEW MEXICO PRINCIPALSHIP STUDY

Formal Expectations and the Principalship

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Abstract

This study reports the findings of a content analysis of job descriptions of principals from 68 of the 88 New Mexico School districts. Two broad domains of functions were identified: Educational Leadership and Administration/Management. The major finding of the study was that Administration/Management functions were most prominently specified, accounting for 1416 of the 1650 items (85.82%). Chief among the Administration/Management functions were those associated with reporting, personnel management, and organizational control.

An explanatory framework for this phenomenon was suggested by Newlon's (1934) observations on the relevance of social history and tradition. A review of the literature on the role of the principal from the mid-nineteenth century to the present time revealed that the initial administrative orientation of the role has persisted over time. Historic efforts to alter that orientation have been largely unsuccessful.

Introduction

If one asks the question, "What is the organizational definition of the principal's role?" a reasonable place to begin is with the job descriptions. Embodied as they typically are within official school district policies and/or administrative regulations, job descriptions establish formal role expectations. Hence we began this portion of the New Mexico Principalship Study at that point, and through the cooperative efforts of state agencies and district superintendents we obtained analytically useable copies of the job descriptions of principals in 68 of New Mexico's 88 school districts.¹

Methodology

The primary analytical technique used was content analysis, a procedure described by Berelson as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."² More precisely, we generated a provisional set of categories and decision rules from a random sample of job descriptions, tested the products, i.e., categories, against another sample, and finally re-coded the entire set based on the refined categories and decision rules developed in stage two.

Limitations

Before proceeding with the findings several limitations should be noted. First, given that the documents assessed were drawn from a single state, we must be cautious in our generalizations. However, we intuitively

sense that the job descriptions of New Mexico principals are not widely deviant. Second, we are sensitive to the distinction made by Bean and Clemes(1978) between job descriptions and role clarity; namely,

A job description identifies the functions that need to be performed in order to fulfill a role. There are several things it does not define:

- a. The relative importance of the different functions.
- b. The manner (style) in which they are to be carried out.
- c. The relative amounts of time to be devoted to each.
- d. The way in which personal mannerisms affect how the functions are performed. (p. 221)

In brief, from the job descriptions per se we know next to nothing about how principals actually behave. Third, and related to the above, given what we know of the power of socialization processes, the idiosyncracies of personal role definitions, and the influence of organizational reward systems and reference group norms, it is unreasonable to assume that a formal job description has more than a minor influence upon role behavior. Finally, while we are personally confident in our own procedures and subsequent findings, we nevertheless recognize that generating categories de novo has some risks. In this regard we are reminded of the poet Luis Borges who, quoting from "a certain Chinese encyclopedia," noted that ". . . animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j)

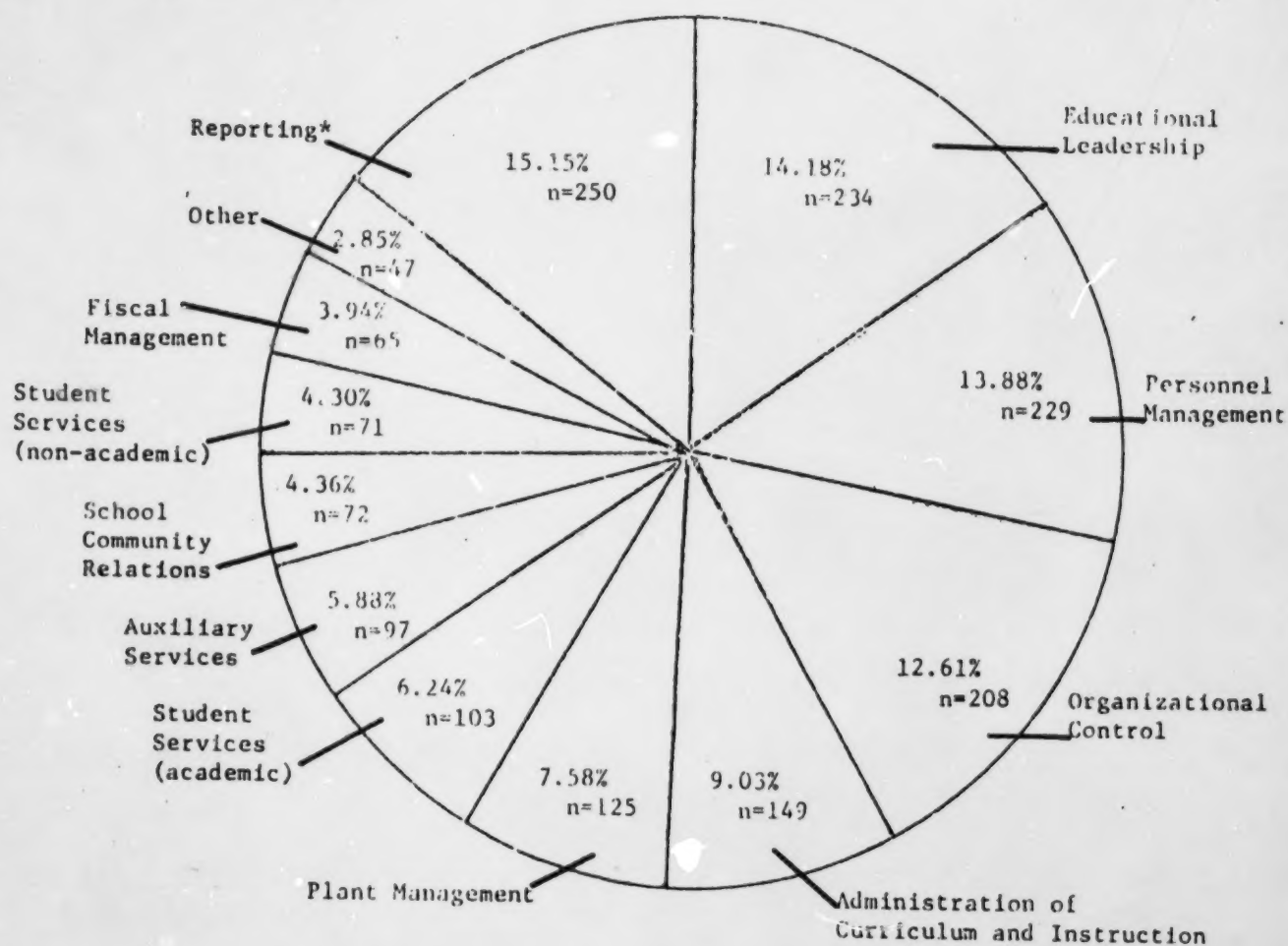
innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies."³

Findings

Our major findings are displayed in Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2. Figure 1 presents the overall distribution of formal job expectations of the school principal; Table 1 provides a more detailed analysis of the major functions; and Table 2 provides a simple rank ordering of major functions.

 Insert Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2 about here

By way of explanation, Table 1, Column 1, presents the major document generated task categories. Two broad aspects of the principal's role are isolated: Educational Leadership and Administration/Management. This partitioning has a long history (Pierce, 1935; Jacobson and Reavis, 1941; Jacobson, Reavis, and Logsdon, 1954), and is made explicit in current New Mexico job descriptions, e.g., the principal is entitled "the administrative head and instructional leader;" "the chief curriculum leader and administrative officer." These two aspects or domains are subdivided into eight and twelve task categories, respectively. Column 2 presents the frequencies, Column 3 the percentages per category, Column 4 the number of district job descriptions which contained an item corresponding to a given category, and Column 5 gives the percentage of school districts



*Includes Federal Programs .30%
Total: 1650

Figure 1: Distribution of expectations of the school principalship

Table 1
Distribution of Expectations of the School Principalship into
Educational Leadership and Administration/Management Functions

Column 1 Category	Column 2 Frequency of Mention	Column 3 Percent of Items	Column 4 Number Districts Reporting	Column 5 Percent of Districts (N = 68)
1.0 Educational Leadership				
1.1 Curriculum: General	46	2.79	46	67.7
1.2 Curriculum: Specific	40	2.41	26	38.2
1.3 Instructional Processes: General	36	2.18	36	52.9
1.4 Instructional Processes: Specific	37	2.24	21	30.8
1.5 Community Resource Utilization	2	.12	2	2.9
1.6 Professional Development	37	2.24	37	54.4
1.7 Professional/Ethical Standards	14	.85	14	20.6
1.8 Organizational Climate	22	1.33	22	32.4
Sub-totals	234	14.18	$\bar{x} = 26$	$\bar{x} = 38.2$
2.0 Administration/Management				
2.01 Administration of C&I	149	9.03	44	64.7
2.02 School/Community Relations	72	4.36	46	67.6
2.03 Personnel Management	229	13.88	64	94.1
2.04 Auxiliary Services	97	5.88	49	72.1
2.05 Student Services:(Academic)	103	6.24	51	75.0
2.06 Student Services: (Non-Academic)	71	4.30	48	70.6
2.07 Fiscal Management	65	3.94	38	55.9
2.08 Reporting	245	14.85	63	92.6
2.09 Plant Management	125	7.58	55	80.1
2.10 Organizational Control	208	12.61	65	95.6
2.11 Miscellaneous	47	2.85	47	69.1
2.12 Federal Programs	5	.30	5	7.3
Sub-totals	1416	85.82	$\bar{x} = 47.9$	$\bar{x} = 70.4$
8 TOTALS	1650	100.00		

5

Table 2
Rank Ordering of Task Expectations of
Principals by Frequency of Mention
in Job Descriptions

Category	f	Percent	Number Districts Reporting	Percent Districts Reporting
1. Reporting (Educational Leadership)	245 (234)	14.85 (14.18)	63	92.6
2. Personnel Management	229	13.88	64	94.1
3. Organizational Control	208	12.61	65	95.6
4. Administration of C&I	149	9.03	44	64.7
5. Plant Management	125	7.58	55	80.1
6. Student Services (Academic)	103	6.24	51	75
7. Auxiliary Services	97	5.88	49	72.1
8. School/Community Relations	72	4.36	46	67.6
9. Student Services (Non-academic)	71	4.30	48	70.6
10. Fiscal Management	65	3.94	38	55.9
11. Other (miscellaneous)	47	2.85	47	69.1
12. Federal Programs	5	.30	5	7.3
TOTALS	1650	100.00		

so reporting. In brief, two units of analysis are utilized: discrete items and school districts.

Even a casual inspection of the data indicates that the Educational Leadership expectations are subordinate to Administrations/Management expectations. Of the 1650 items, only 234 (14.82%) address the former while 1416 (85.82%) address the latter. This is particularly striking since (a) we took an extremely liberal definition of Educational Leadership, and (b) much of the professional lore and literature has stressed the leadership role of principals. Yet that role is generally de-emphasized. Note, for example in Table 1, Column 3, that in only three of the eight categories of Educational Leadership are a majority of school districts represented. Further, in all but two cases the category is represented by a single item (cf. Columns 3 and 4).

One final bit of evidence. When, for example, we examined category 1.2 more closely (Curriculum: Specific; 40 items, 26 districts reporting), we obtained the following data:

Sub-category	f
a. Needs assessment	7
b. Formulation of objectives	4
c. Organization of content	3
d. Curriculum development/ revision	8
e. Editing/publishing	3
f. Research	13
g. Other	3

From data such as these it is difficult at best to argue that principals are formally expected to be highly instrumental instructionally.

When we turn to an examination of the Administration/Management domain an entirely different picture emerges. As the sub-totals and means in Columns 2,3,4 and 5 of Table 1 show, the frequencies, percentages, and means all rise dramatically (234 vs. 1416 (Col.2); 14.18% vs. 85.82% (Col.3); $\bar{x} = 26$ vs. $\bar{x} 47.9$ (Col.4); $\bar{x} = 38.2$ vs. $\bar{x} = 70.4$ (Col.5)). Further, as Table 2 indicates, "Reporting" as a singular expectation for administrative/managerial behavior accounts for a higher frequency and percentage of job description items that does the entire domain of Educational Leadership. Similarly, the highest ranking category of Educational Leadership, Curriculum: General, ranks lower than any category of Administration/Management except "Federal Programs."

According to Table 2, the dominant Administration/Management expectations are "Reporting," "Personnel Management," and "Organizational Control." Combined, these account for 682 of the 1650 job description items or 41.33% of the total. "Reporting" heads the list -- fiscal reports, attendance reports, accident reports, inventory reports, and so forth. The magnitude of these demands was confirmed by one of our respondents who wrote, "Eighty percent of my time is spent filling out SDE, migrant, Title I, IV, IX, etc. forms."

"Personnel Management" expectations ranked second. Among these, our data indicate that the combined set of staffing functions, i.e., recruitment, screening, hiring, etc., ranked first (N = 148), but that the most frequent single reference in the job description was to performance appraisal (N = 50).

The third most frequently mentioned Administration/Management expectation (N = 208) was what we categorized as "Organizational Control." Herein we included all references to rule and policy formulation/dissemination/enforcement, student discipline, correspondence control ("censorship") and the like. Perhaps the most striking fact is that "Organizational Control" functions were specified in more job descriptions (N = 65; 95.6% of districts reporting) than any other task expectation.

The magnitude of the finding that administrative/managerial expectations overshadowed leadership expectations by a ratio of approximately 7:1 led us to a confirmatory analysis. In brief, we abstracted the verbs-in-use, e.g., "conduct", "confer", "enforce", "promote", etc., from a random sample of job descriptions and classified them as administration-oriented vs. leadership-oriented. Further, to check against our own biases and preconceptions we engaged our faculty colleagues and a group of advanced doctoral students in the classification task. Inter-rate reliability was high (.91). The results confirmed and exceeded our initial findings. Of the 228 verbs isolated, 206 (90.35%) were classified as administration-oriented while only 22 (9.65%) were classified as leadership-oriented. Clearly, the principal focus of principal's job descriptions is administrative/managerial.

Discussion

The question which immediately rises from the major finding just reported is, "How does one explain the dominant Administration/Management focus of the principal's job description given the press for re-conceptualizing the role as instructional leadership?" While there are

undoubtedly a number of explanations possible, ours takes a decidedly historical cast. Forty-five years ago Jesse Newlon (1934) wrote:

Educational practice is always in large part the product of social experience, whether that experience derive from a long social history or from more immediate conditions and measures. It should be remembered that a tradition, no matter how much it may be embroidered by unreality, may be the most concrete of realities as it affects the public mind. (p.231)

Taking our cue from Newlon we attempted to determine the "social history" of the principalship, to determine the roots and lineage of the educational leadership-administrative "tradition" which provides the source of the ambiguity and tensions surrounding the role of the principalship today (Jacobson, Logsdon, and Wiegman, 1973; Goldhammer, 1971).

The most comprehensive study of the early years of the principalship is Paul Revere Pierce's (1935) The Origin and Development of the Public School Principalship. In reading the text it becomes apparent that the leadership-administration duality was present from the outset in the evolution of the role. It is equally obvious that the administrative/managerial emphasis was pre-eminent. Pierce's abstract from the Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Common Schools of Cincinnati (1853) makes these points clear:

The Male Principal, as the local superintendent, is responsible for the observance and enforcement of the rules and regulations of the Board for the guidance and direction of Teachers and government of the schools, and is accordingly invested with authority to carry them into effect.

With the cooperation of the Female Principal, he is to classify the pupils in the different grades above the primary department, according to their advancement in arithmetical studies. He shall employ half an hour each day in visiting the Schools of his District, and shall announce to the other departments, by the ringing of a bell, the hour for beginning and closing school, for the recitation of classes and for recess. He shall promulgate to all the Teachers such rules and regulations of general application as he may receive from the Board, and record the same on the blank leaves of the Rules and Regulations - shall transmit to the Clerk, at the close of each school month, all bills for salaries of teachers and report monthly to the Board according to blank forms furnished him, with additional information as the Board may from time to time require, or as he may think important to communicate - and any failure, except sickness, to file with the Clerk the aforesaid report,

according to the full requirements of the forms prescribed, will debar him from the reception of his salary until the same is rendered to the satisfaction of the Board. He shall submit to the Clerk, at the close of each quarter, a report of the condition of all the schools in his District, and a similar report at the close of each year. He shall also at the close of each year return to the Clerk the keys to the rooms of the house over which he has had charge. He shall see to the safe keeping and protection of the house, furniture, apparatus, fences, trees and shrubbery, and maintain the strictest cleanliness in the school and out houses. He shall require the pupils not to appear in the yard earlier than fifteen minutes before the opening of the school, and prevent them by noise or otherwise from annoying the neighborhood of the school. He shall provide for the sweeping and scrubbing, lighting and maintaining of fires of the house, by some suitable person or persons acceptable to the local Trustees, and for payment of the same, shall make an equal per cent assessment on all the teachers in the house, according to their respective salaries, and any teacher, declining to pay his or her share of such assessment, upon being reported to the Board, will have the same deducted from their salary. . . . (p.63)

Chauvinism aside, it is of more than casual interest that of the eleven responsibilities identified only one ("He shall employ half and hour each day in visiting the Schools of his District") speaks to the educational leadership role. However, one should bear in mind that the "Male Principal" referred to was a teaching principal who had limited time for instructional interaction with teachers. Nonetheless, Pierce notes that when principals were relieved of major teaching responsibilities and, in addition, were provided with clerical assistance, they rarely maximized the leadership opportunities. Pierce comments:

The principals were slow individually and as a group, to take advantage of the opportunities for professional leadership which were granted to them. This tendency was especially marked during the period 1895-1910. The principalship was well established from an administrative point of view, and at that point, principals appeared content to rest. Except for sporadic cases, they did little to study their work, experiment with administrative procedures, or publish articles on local administration and supervision. The large body of them were satisfied to attend to clerical and petty routine, administering their schools on a policy of laissez faire. They were generally entrenched behind their tenure rights, and they usually hesitated to show vigorous leadership to their teachers who naturally were often as reactionary, professionally, as the principals themselves. They were

content to use "rule of thumb" procedures in dealing with supervision of instruction. Principals' associations, for the most part, were concerned with welfare features of the position, though there were instances where these organizations were of considerable assistance in constructing and revising courses of study. (p. 21)

Beyond inertia, or perhaps more accurately the power of the emergent tradition, two factors appear to be largely responsible for this state of affairs. First, many principals apparently were no better trained than the teachers and hence were in no position to exert the power of expertness. The Tenth Annual Report of the Common Schools of Cincinnati (1839) notes that "Many assistant teachers [as contrasted with principal teachers] were so well versed in their work as to require little or no instruction from principals" (p.23). Second, as schools grew in size and complexity, administrative requirements increased. Pierce notes from his study of published reports of the boards of education of Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, New York, and St. Louis, that 79 additional administrative duties were prescribed for principals between 1853-1900. Of these, 32 were concerned with organization and general management, 12 with equipment and supplies, 11 with office duties, 10 with pupil personnel, 6 with buildings and grounds, and 8 with miscellaneous activities (pp. 33-34). The absence of any significant number dealing uniquely with instruction is striking. Such data led Pierce to conclude,

"The closing decades of the nineteenth century found the principal in large cities well established, not to say entrenched, as the recognized administrative head of his school" (p.39). It would appear that the efforts of superintendents like Wells of Cincinnati and Harris of St. Louis had only marginal impact on shaping the principalship in an instructional mold.

The administrative tradition developed during the last half of the nineteenth century was further strengthened during the early decades of the twentieth. The unprecedented growth of industrialization with its associated ethics and emphases upon productivity, efficiency, accountability, and management skills had a pervasive influence in schools (Callahan, 1962). Further, influential spokesmen for the schools, notably Chancellor, Cubberly, Strayer, and Bobbitt, stressed the managerial aspects of school administration. Chancellor (1904), for example, wrote, "Recently there has been differentiated from the teachers a class of school directors, administrators, and supervisors, whose function is management rather than instruction" (p.v).

The extent to which authors like the above rather than the Deweys and Parkers influenced the direction of the principalship is evident from a study by Wang (1931) who analyzed 150 sets of regulations prescribing the duties of principals. Wang's data as "adapted" by Jacobsen and Reavis (1941) are presented in Table 3.

 Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3
Number and Frequency of Duties of Principals Specified
By Rules and Regulations of Boards of
Education in 150 Cities^a

Classification of Duties	Number of Items	Frequency of Mention	PERCENT of Frequency
Administrative:			
1. General power and control	35	316	
2. Pupils	52	582	
3. Teachers	31	188	
4. Janitors	3	115	
5. Personal regulations	42	146	
6. Buildings and grounds	12	220	
7. Fire drills	11	117	
8. Financial affairs	6	35	
9. Other administrative affairs	34	264	
TOTAL	226	1983	57.7
Clerical:			
1. General records and reports	17	254	
2. Records and reports concerning pupils	13	284	
3. Records and reports concerning teachers	5	79	
4. Supplies and repairs	13	249	
5. Other routine affairs	8	49	
TOTAL	56	915	26.6
Supervisory:			
1. Instructional	21	284	
2. Classification and promotion of pupils	3	77	
3. Pupil adjustment and guidance	5	13	
4. Curriculum	4	6	
5. Professional study	10	62	
6. Supplementary supervision	1	14	
TOTAL	44	456	13.3
Teaching	12	20	.6
Miscellaneous:			
1. Suggestions for improvement	2	25	
2. Extra - curriculum	3	13	
3. Social	5	24	
TOTAL	10	62	1.8
GRAND TOTAL	348	3436	100.0

^aData adapted from Wang, Fung-Chiai, "Duties of Principals as Revealed Through School Board Rules", unpublished master's thesis, Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1931, pp. 51-52. Cited in Jacobson, P.B. and Reavis, W.C. Duties of the School Principal, New York: Printice Hall, Inc., 1941, pp. 18-19.

It is immediately noticeable that administrative and clerical responsibilities combined account for the majority (84.3%) of the expectations. Even more striking is its comparability to the 1978 New Mexico data. This comparison is presented in Table 4.

 Insert Table 4 about here

The collapsed percentages, however, are somewhat misleading insofar as they disguise certain changes of emphases within domains. Consequently, in order to obtain more directly comparable data and to reveal the more subtle changes, we re-analyzed Wang's data in accord with the New Mexico categories and decision rules. The results are displayed in Table 5.

 Insert Table 5 about here

Inspection of Table 5 reveals that in the main the overall distribution of task emphasis is similar. The Educational Leadership function has increased slightly in overall importance (10.54% vs. 14.18%) although within this domain variation occurs, e.g., less emphasis on instructional processes than formerly, more on curriculum. The same generalizations hold true for the Administration/Management domain. Overall the percentages remain reasonably constant while variations appear within categories. Categories 2.01 - 2.06 currently show frequency and percentage increases,

Table 4

Comparison of Percentages of Collapsed Categories Representative
of Broad Expectations of the Principalship as Reported
by Wang (1935) and Pohland and Higbie (1978)

Category	Wang Percentage	Category	Pohland/Higbie Percentage
Administrative/ Clerical	84.3	Administrative/ Clerical	85.8
Supervisory	13.3	Educational Leadership	14.2
Teaching/ Miscellaneous	<u>2.4</u>		<u>.0</u>
TOTAL	100.0		100.0

Table 5

Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages of Specific Expectations of the
Principalship as Reported by Wang (1931) and Pohland/Higbie (1978)

Category	Frequency of Mention	Percent of Items	Frequency of Mention	Percent of Items
1.0 Educational Leadership				
1.1 Curriculum: General & Specific	14	.41	86	5.20
1.2 Instructional Processes	284	8.31	73	4.42
1.3 Community Resource Use	0	.00	2	2.90
1.4 Professional Development	62	1.82	51	3.09
1.5 Organizational Climate	0	.00	22	1.33
Sub-totals	360	10.54	234	14.18
2.0 Administration/Management				
2.01 Administration of C&I	6	.12	149	9.03
2.02 School Community Relations	24	.70	72	4.36
2.03 Personnel Management	188	5.50	229	13.88
2.04 Auxiliary Services	117	3.43	97	5.88
2.05 Student Services: Academic	90	2.63	103	6.24
2.06 Student Services: Non-academic	13	.38	71	4.30
2.07 Fiscal Management	159	4.65	65	3.94
2.08 Reporting	642	18.79	245	15.15
2.09 Plant Management	460	13.47	125	7.58
2.10 Organizational Control	1044	30.56	208	12.61
2.11 Miscellaneous	313	9.16	47	2.85
Sub-totals	3056	89.39	1416	85.82
TOTALS	3416 ^a	99.93	1650	100.00

^aTeaching accounted for 20 items in the Wang categorized duties which were removed for this analysis.
The original Wang study included a total of 3436 items.

while categories 2.07 - 2.11 reflect decreases. Given the "social history" of schools such variations would be reasonably easy to explain.

Two final bits of data from the early decades support the contention that the principalship was evolving in a dominantly managerial fashion. During this period of time literally innumerable school surveys were conducted. Some of the survey data bore on the role of the principal.

To quote from the Cincinnati School Survey Report of 1935:

High School principals and their assistants for all practical purposes are administrators. If an occasional principal finds time for other than administrative duties he is likely to give it all to work of a guidance or counseling nature. Most principals give no time at all to supervision in the modern sense. (p. 84)

The general invariability of such observations from survey to survey led Jacobson and Reavis (1941) to comment:

Additional examples are unnecessary to make clear that principals are falling short of expectations in the performance of duties considered fundamental to the improvement of instruction in their schools. In defense of the way they spend their time, principals might claim that they are required to perform so many routine administrative duties that the supervision of instruction and other time-consuming professional duties must be neglected. (p. 13)

The succeeding decades saw an intensification of the tensions between the demands for educational leadership and managerial roles for principals. Authors like Spain, Drummond, and Goodlad (1956), Jacobson, Reavis, and Logsdon (1954), and Kyte (1952) advocated the former. Others like Lieberman (1956) and Moehlman (1951) advocated the latter, insisting that the principal should attend solely to routine administrative and clerical duties. In practice the weight of evidence appears to reside with the Lieberman/Moehlman point of view. Jacobson, Reavis, and Logsdon (1950) report a study conducted by the Department of Elementary School Principals of the NEA in 1948. The data which are reproduced in Table 6 are instructive, particularly with regard to the classification of duties. Clearly,

 Insert Table 6 about here

respondents saw the principalship as primarily administrative.

Our survey of the literature from the immediate past 30 years suggests little basic alteration in the principal's historic role. The 1978 New Mexico data clearly confirm this. Supporting evidence is available from a series of NASSP and DESP studies. Data from The Senior High School Principalship (1965) show that principals identified administrative planning as the most time consuming of 18 selected categories of activity and supervisory functions among the least. Evidence of a similar trend toward increased administrative expectations for elementary school principals is available from DESP studies conducted in 1958 and 1968. Comparative data indicate that principals were more instrumental in personnel management functions and budgetary matters in 1968 than in 1958.

Table 6

Mandatory and Discretionary Duties of
Elementary School Principals (1948)

Mandatory ministerial duties:^a

- To be present in building between specified hours
- To keep certain records and accounts
- To receipt for delivered supplies
- To check school census
- To inventory equipment, books, and supplies
- To check payroll list
- To report injuries of pupils and employees
- To fly the American flag

Discretionary ministerial duties:^b

- To conduct fire drills
- To supervise janitors
- To report needed building and equipment repairs
- To supervise building at recess and noon hour
- To notify parents of unsatisfactory work of pupils
- To regulate, permit, or refuse entrance to visitors
- To regulate, permit, or prohibit advertising or exhibits in school
- To requisition and dispense supplies and equipment

Discretionary powers:^c

- To classify pupils
- To keep personnel records of teachers
- To keep personnel records of pupils
- To assign teachers
- To make curriculum schedules
- To conduct teachers' meetings
- To allocate funds made available for building, according to budget
- To obtain substitutes for teachers who are absent
- To evaluate instruction
- To co-operate with juvenile court and other law enforcement agencies
- To handle complaints of patrons
- To discipline students

^aDuties classified as mandatory ministerial are those which are required of the principal not only as to performance but also as to how and when performed.

^bDuties classified as discretionary ministerial are those which are discretionary only as to how the required end is achieved.

^cDiscretionary powers are those in which the principal may use his judgment as to how, when, and sometimes whether a certain matter is done. In some cities, elementary school principals have more discretion in some of these matters than in other cities.

Source: National Education Association, Department of Elementary School Principals, The Elementary School Principalship - Today and Tomorrow. National Elementary Principal, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (Twenty-Seventh Yearbook), September, 1948.

A corresponding phenomenon has been the increased awareness of the tension and ambiguity surrounding the role of the principal (Foskett, 1967; Jacobson, Logsdon, and Wiegman, 1953; Trask, 1964; McIntyre, 1971). Principals are simultaneously being exhorted to behave as "educational engineers" (Hughes and Ubben, 1978), "educational executives" (Guba, 1970), "educational statesmen" (McCleary and Hencley, 1965; Stone, 1968), "instructional coordinators" (Otto, 1948), "change agents" (Bennis, 1966), "instructional leaders" (Knezevich, 1975), and more. Similarly, the principal is variously exhorted to spend more/less time on curriculum development, instructional processes, pupil personnel services, community relations, long range planning, administrative coordination, and the like. Clearly, no principal can fulfill all of these expectations simultaneously, if at all. The social history and tradition of the principalship suggest that the tensions and ambiguities will be resolved in favor of administration. Salley, McPherson, and Baehr (1979) have reached the same conclusion, albeit by a somewhat different route:

In our judgment, there has been change in American education, but it has only been to solidify the bureaucratization and mechanization of American schools and school systems. Professional educators, as well as many adult clients of the schools, appear to be more obsessed with management than with education. Thus, the job of principal is increasingly defined in terms of administrative rather than instructional functions.

We doubt, perhaps cynically, that this pattern will be altered. If anything, the federal government, state departments of education, foundations, universities, local boards of education, and citizens-at-large are tending to increase the pressure on this principal to become a production manager. If this is so, we only ask that the principal be given a set of unambiguous expectations by these groups. In short, we may want to take the principal off the hooks marked "change agent" and "instructional leader." (p.38).

Summary

This study began as a simple, descriptive, straight-forward study of principals' job descriptions currently in use in New Mexico school districts. Data from all 88 New Mexico school districts were solicited; useable data were obtained from 68. The major finding of the content analysis performed was that the formal role expectations are dominantly administrative/managerial in orientation, accounting for 1416 of the 1650 job description items (85.82%). Only 234 items (14.18%) spoke to what we classified as educational leadership expectations.

Conscious of Newlon's (1934) observation concerning the power of social history and tradition we sought an explanation of the distribution of task emphases in the history of the principalship. Consequently we surveyed the history of that role, attending particularly to comparable job description studies. While such studies were few in number they

fortunately spanned major eras. The major finding of this portion of the research was that with respect to formal expectations as expressed in job descriptions, the principalship has remained fundamentally unaltered over the past century. Despite recurring efforts over the years to re-shape the principalship in a variety of ways, e.g., as "instructional leadership," the initial administrative/managerial thrust of that role has remained intact. Finally, while predicting the future is obviously fraught with danger, current conditions suggest few substantive changes in the years to come. As Salley, McPherson, and Baehr (1979) point out, the bureaucratization of schools has solidified. Reversing that trend may be impossible short of revolution. The propensity to refer to principals as "middle management" or part of the "management team" further strengthens the administrative perspective of that role. Educational Leadership appears more than ever to be a dream rather than a present or future reality. In a two horse race, Jimmy the Greek would have no difficulty in betting the odds.⁵

Footnotes

1. Ten districts did not respond to the request for data. Of the remaining 10, five noted that their districts had no job descriptions for principals, three indicated no unique principalship role, and two districts submitted unuseable documents.
2. Berelson, B. Content Analysis in Communication Research. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952, p. 18. See also Ole R. Holsti, "Content Analysis," The Handbook of Social Psychology, 2nd ed., Vol. II, Research Methods, ed. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson. Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1968.
3. Cited by Bennis, W. G., "A Bright Future for Complexity," Technology Review, Vol. 81, No. 4 (February, 1979) p. 19.
4. Since we did not wish to distract the reader from the major themes of the study we have not included or discussed other findings. However, we briefly list them here.
 1. Most job description items were "soft", i.e., non-behavioral (97.7%).
 2. References to current conceptions of administration, e.g., tension management, MBO, PPBS, etc. were extremely rare.
 3. Relations with teachers were characteristically phrased in bureaucratic rather than professional terms (Corwin, 1965).
 4. Little differentiation was found among job descriptions for senior high, junior high, and elementary school principals.

Footnotes

5. School district reliance on a limited number of "model" job descriptions was high.
 6. The modal academic requirement for the principalship was an MA.
 7. Extreme variability exists with respect to experiential qualifications.
 8. Lines of authority are clear. The great majority of principals report directly to the superintendent.
 9. Full-time principals outnumber part-time principals by a ratio of 9:1.
 10. Only a slight correlation ($r = + .29$) exists between job description extensiveness as measured by number of items and school district size as measured by ADM.
5. Any doubt about the direction school administration is taking should be dispelled by reviewing the most recent professional journal of the National School Boards Association entitled The Executive Educator.

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